

yet tender; quiet, yet passionate; realistic, yet romantic—such was the man, and such is his poetry. The first impression is of a prosaic naturalist, both in the scientific and in the literary sense of that word. He botanises and entomologises, so to speak, in his observation of nature and human nature; with a preference for hemlock over roses, for moths over butterflies. He is more interested in a flatworm than a python. He shows the absorption of an eager student of medicine in a really bad case. Hence the familiar phrase about 'Pope in worsted stockings'<sup>5</sup>; hence the complaint of Wordsworth that 'Crabbe's verses are in no sense poetry' and 'nineteen-twentieths of his pictures are mere matters of fact'; of Coleridge, that there was in him 'an absolute defect of the high imagination'; of Landor's Porson that he 'wrote with a twopenny nail ... on mud walls'.

It is an understandable attitude. Crabbe is more than a verse Defoe, but he is that in part. It is not necessarily a weakness: Crabbe's romantic contemporaries and successors would have been none the worse if their own pictures had more often been 'matters of fact'. He may lack 'the high imagination'; but at least he had, what they often wanted, that lower imagination which can see and make others see, not things that never were, but things that are. Crabbe, indeed, belonged to that class of human beings of whom we may say that pink

Come, search within, nor sight nor smell  
regard;  
The true physician walks the foulest ward.

Since vice the world subdued, and waters  
drown'd,  
Auburn and Eden can no more be found.